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# Hinckleys known as God-fearing family

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Staff Writer

From all accounts, John W. Hinckley Sr. and his family emulated upper middle class American life: A close-knit family of God-fearing fundamentalists who skirted millionaire oilmen and leaned heavily toward conservatism.

And from the accounts of close friends, business associates and clergymen who praised the Hinckleys, it seemed almost impossible that someone from this former Highland Park family, which had neighbors like Nelson Bunker Hunt and Gov. William P. Clements Jr., could now be accused of shooting President Ronald Reagan.

From the time John Hinckley Sr. moved his family from Oklahoma in 1955, they lived in the affluent island suburbs of old Dallas money, the areas that always have supported conservative Republicans like Ronald Reagan, people Hinckley believed would save the country from ruin.

First it was a two-story house at 4128 Caruth, along the fringes of Park Cities.

But soon, the millionaire oilman and engineer made his way to the center of wealth when he moved his wife, Joanna, and three children, Diane, John Jr. and Scott, into a Highland Park mansion at 3520 Beverly, a larger house with a circular driveway and a large swimming pool, the kind of place that was more fitting with the kind of lifestyle he wanted for his children.

There, the Hinckleys established an impeccable reputation: John Sr., a quiet, handsome, likeable occasional golfer, president of the Vanderbilt Energy Corp., an oil exploration company, born-again Christian and mem-



Sister of suspect, Diane, as she appeared in 1971 Highland Park yearbook photo.

ber at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Highland Park.

His wife, an attractive, outgoing, vivacious housewife, served as a member of the St. Michael selective altar guild. His children, Scott, now 32, Mrs. Diane Sims, 28, and young John Warnock Hinckley Jr., the baby of the family, also established themselves as ordinary, clean-cut teen-age kids who played on their front yard like other kids and who always stayed out of trouble. In fact, police said, the only time they can recall answering a call to the mansion was once when Diane's car stereo was stolen.

Son Scott left Dallas for Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., then later rejoined his family in Colorado to help run his father's company.

Diane, the socialite cheerleader and

former homecoming queen candidate at Highland Park High, went on to Southern Methodist University, became active in Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and later married Stephen D. Sims, an underwriter of Mutual of New York insurance in Dallas.

The Sims live in a red-brick home at 9611 Crestedge in Northeast Dallas with their new-born child. It was there, early Monday afternoon, that Mrs. Sims found out her brother was under arrest for the shooting of President Reagan.

A painter, who did not give his name, said he was working in the Sims' house when news of the assassination attempt and Hinckley's involvement came over the television.

"I was painting upstairs," said the workman. "It was the weirdest thing I've ever seen."

"She (Diana Sims) found out about it like everyone else. On the news," he said. She left shortly after that and went into seclusion.

When John Jr. dropped out of Texas Tech University last year before earning his degree in business administration, family associates said his father was deeply concerned.

But the troubles that struck the youngest member of the family did little to tarnish the family's record in the eyes of friends.

"They are people of the highest character in business, civic and the church," said one friend of the family.

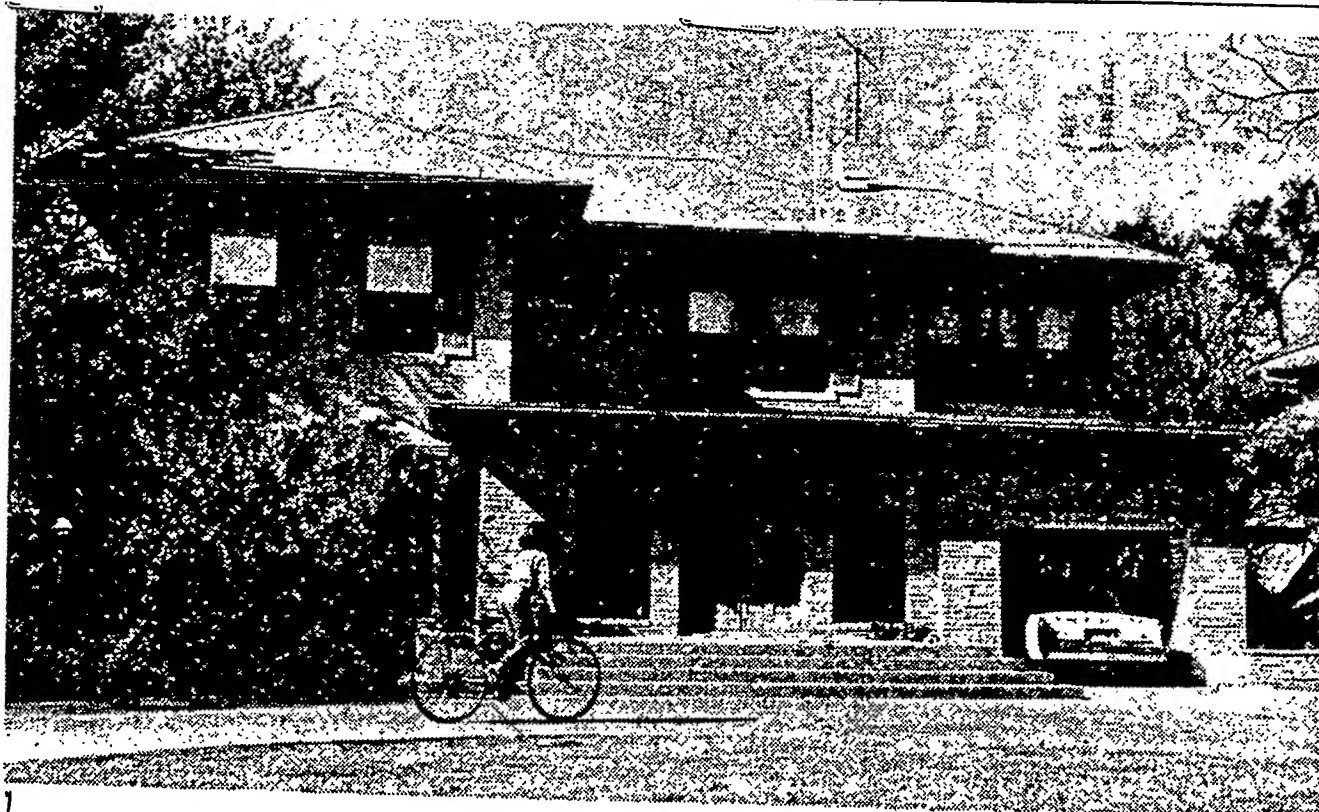
In Dallas, Hinckley continued developing his oil business that associates said he built to a multimillion dollar operation from a one-man shop with hard work. He moved the business to Denver in November 1974 because of his love for the mountainous atmosphere of the Rockies.

Friends and associates described Hinckley as an extremely hard working, astute businessman who has

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— Staff photo by Skeeter Hagler

### *Hinckley family lived at 3520 Beverly in Highland Park before moving to Colorado*

"taken many risks in his business and proved to be successful." Today, Hinckley's holdings in the publicly held corporation are estimated at about \$2.4 million.

Though not a lobbyist, Hinckley has traveled around the country talking to different organizations about the problems of small independent oilmen. He gave to the political campaigns of Republicans like John Connally and Ronald Reagan.

The Hinckleys never established themselves in the social circles, however. The family, said one former neighbor in Highland Park, "did not mix" in their adopted neighborhood. His move to Evergreen, a suburb of Denver and a paradise community at the 7,250-foot level of the Rockies, pushed the Hinckleys higher in society. Their two-story home, valued at \$400,000, sits near a trout lake and among the exclusive residences of other millionaire executives. His neighbor, A. B. Slaybaugh, is the vice president of Conoco Oil Co.

Despite the long hours and hard work, however, the family never neglected one aspect of its life: religion.

"They had just an excellent, excellent attendance record," said Dr. Donald Henning, retired pastor at the 5,000-member St. Michael.

Rev. Clarence Westapher, another former minister at St. Michael, remembered the Hinckleys as "a very committed Christian family."

"They were of course very conservative in their politics only because everybody at St. Michael's church was very conservative in their politics. But they were active lay leaders in the church."

Rev. Charles Blakeslee, pastor of the Church of the Transfiguration in Evergreen, also spoke highly of the family, but said the Hinckleys left the Episcopal church two years ago to join another denomination in Denver.

"They were Bible fundamentalists, and they just didn't like our interpretation of the Bible. They were very nice people, and there were no ani-

mosities over it, no uproar," Rev. Blakeslee said.

It was their religion that in recent years has taken an even more important role in the life of John W. Hinckley Sr.

Recently, Hinckley started the John Hinckley Foundation, his own private relief organization that he planned to use to fight hunger and starvation.

Once, Hinckley flew to the African nation of Biafra to help coordinate relief efforts there.

"They're involved in that type of work in giving of their time and money in causes they feel benefit the community and the world," a friend said.

Friends said that in recent years, as Hinckley has turned more of his attention to his relief efforts, he is turning more and more control of the Vanderbilt Energy Corporation to his son, 32-year-old Scott, who is now the operations manager of the firm.